ACTION GUIDE

ANNIVERSARY OF *ROE V. WADE:* JANUARY

INTRODUCTION

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court legalized abortion throughout the United States in its companion decisions ***Roe v. Wade*** and ***Doe v. Bolton***. Since that time, millions of children have lost their lives, and millions of women and families have been wounded by abortion.

On June 24, 2022, the ***Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*** decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*, and we praise God for the great opportunity state and federal legislators now have to protect preborn children. While God, in His mercy, ended the nearly fifty-year nationwide regime of abortion on demand, right now state and federal laws, in many instances, are still hostile to preborn children. So, great prayer and advocacy is very needed.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 373, designates January 22 as a particular day of prayer and penance, called the **"**Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children**."** The Church directs:

> *In all the Dioceses of the United States of America, January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday) shall be observed as a particular day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.*

As individuals, we are called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting and/or almsgiving. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops provides resources to help parishes, schools, families, ministries, and individual Catholics participate in this important day of prayer and penance.

Free downloads and additional electronic resources can be found at respectlife.org/action-guides.

In addition, the USCCB also sponsors an annual, nationwide novena called **9 Days for Life,** which encompasses the liturgical observance of the Day of Prayer. Each day for nine days, a different intention is featured, accompanied by a short reflection, suggested actions, and related information as we pray for the respect and protection of every human life. Visit respectlife.org/9-days-for-life for more information on the annual campaign.

A sample timeline and activity, homily helps, announcements, and more are provided to help you get started. You are encouraged to adapt these resources as needed to fit your specific parish, school, or ministry.

Free downloads and additional electronic resources can be found at respectlife.org/action-guides.

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SIMPLE STEPS

Here is a list of simple steps that you can use in your parish, school, ministry, or at home to participate in the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children and associated activities. These steps offer ideas on how to use the provided resources. Each step may not apply to your specific circumstance, but most can be adapted to suit your needs. Don't be afraid to get creative!

1. Spread the word!

Include the 9 Days for Life flyer in your bulletins for the weekend(s) in January before the start of the novena, or include the flyer in an email newsletter. 9 Days for Life is designed so that Catholics all across the nation can unite together in prayer for the protection of human life. Encourage those in your community to sign up at **9daysforlife.com** so they automatically receive the novena when it begins! Short bulletin announcements for 9 Days for Life are also provided below. Use one of the sample bulletin announcements for the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children the weekend before to inform your community about the observance.

2. Invite others to participate.

Announce 9 Days for Life from the pulpit on the weekends before the start of the novena and during regularly scheduled ministry gatherings. Share about the Church's observance of the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children the weekend prior to it, and encourage parishioners to participate by offering up a personal act of prayer or penance. Information on the Day of Prayer can be included during announcements before or after Mass, or even highlighted during the homily. Sample announcements are included below to help you invite others to join in these important prayer opportunities.

3. Preach on respect for human life on January 22 and the weekend prior.

Sample homily helps are provided to aid priests and deacons in preaching on respect for human life in their Sunday homily and to observe the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (January 22). For options for readings for January 22 and more information on this observance, visit **respectlife.org/january-22**.

4. Pray for the protection of human life during the Prayer of the Faithful.

Sample intercessions are provided for use in the Prayer of the Faithful during Masses on January 22 and the weekend before. Schools can use these intercessions to observe the Day of Prayer by praying them together at the beginning of class. Families can include these intercessions in their regular prayers in the morning, evening, or before or after a family meal.

5. Share what you're doing.

Use social media to share the daily 9 Days for Life prayer intentions with the hashtag **#9DaysforLife**. Highlight part of each day's reflection that stuck out to you. If a group from your parish is praying the novena together, share that on your parish social media pages, and invite others to join you!

We would love to see how you and your family, parish, or school participate!
Email us at prolife@usccb.org, or tag us on Facebook (USCCB Respect Life) or Twitter (@usccbprolife).

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SAMPLE TIMELINE

January all too often seems to race by before we know it. Returning to our regular schedules after the holidays is never easy. As the New Year unfolds, make a resolution to help your faith community begin the New Year by praying for the protection of human life.

The key to success will be getting an early start and planning ahead. Because the anniversary of ***Roe v. Wade*** falls during the month of January, much of the planning and preparation needs to take place before or during the holidays. We have provided a sample timeline to help you prepare for the January Respect Life events, taking into consideration the holiday bustle. While these steps apply most directly to a parish coordinator, they can be adapted to help you think about key steps you can take to plan ahead in whatever capacity you serve the Church.

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JANUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Mid-November

- Begin by visiting **respectlife.org/action-guides** to review and familiarize yourself with the new materials. Download any resources you hope to utilize in January. This can include bulletin announcements, intercessions, the 9 Days for Life novena, graphics, homily notes, and the like. Begin to brainstorm about how you would like to use the provided materials to pray for life in your community.
- Request an appointment with your pastor for later in the month to discuss the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children and 9 Days for Life.

Early December

- Meet with your pastor. Remind him about the upcoming Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (January 22), and let him know about the 9 Days for Life novena, if he is unfamiliar with it. Let him know what resources are available, such as homily notes, liturgical resources, options for readings on January 22, and prayer intercessions. Share information with him about 9 Days for Life and any ideas you may have about promoting it in your parish. Request permission for setting up a display table in the vestibule or other visible area the weekend before the start of the novena. This will allow you to highlight 9 Days for Life and the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children when the entire parish community is gathered together. Also, be sure to ask permission for any bulletin submissions you have in mind and for any other special activities you would like to plan. Answer any questions he may have, such as how parishioners can sign up for 9 Days for Life. Most importantly, *ask what you can do to help*. Sometimes directly sending him resources, such as homily notes, will save him time.
- Following your conversation with your pastor, contact your parish office to open the lines of communication. Share the results of that conversation and what you are requesting from them for observing the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children and participating in 9 Days for Life. Many parishes need content several weeks in advance to be able to

include it in the weekly bulletin; ask about bulletin submission policies and deadlines, and share what content you hope to have featured during the month of January. This will help your parish plan ahead and allot the necessary space in the bulletin. Again, most importantly, *ask what you can do to help.*

Mid-December

- Complete all bulletin submissions for the month of January. This includes the flyer and/or bulletin announcement for 9 Days for Life and the announcement for the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Consider including the short reflection "**Living Out Christmas in the New Year**" in your bulletin or newsletter the weekends before the novena begins.
- Start recruiting volunteers to help you staff the table after each Mass the weekend before the start of the novena to help answer questions, share Respect Life resources, or assist in other ways. If internet access will be available, you may even want to consider having a computer or tablet available for parishioners to sign up for the novena on the spot at **www.9daysforlife.com**. This helps ensure that they won't forget before they get home, and they'll automatically receive reminders when the novena begins.

First Week of January

- Touch base with your pastor to offer further assistance and confirm any plans you may have made. Reconnect with the appropriate parish staff members regarding your bulletin submissions, table display, and any other plans. This is the time to tie up any loose ends, verify that all content has been received, finalize plans, and determine whether there are any follow-up tasks to be completed.
- Begin gathering materials for your table display. Make copies of the 9 Days for Life flyer to have available at the table. For those who may not be able to access the novena electronically, print copies of the novena to have on hand. For tips on setting up a display table, visit **www.respectlife.org/action-guides**.

Weekend(s) Prior to Start of 9 Days for Life

Set up your table prior to the Saturday Vigil Mass. Coordinate with your team of volunteers to make sure friendly faces are available to share information about 9 Days for Life and the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. Make sure to leave your contact information (email or phone) at the table in case any visitors have questions or need more information while you're not there.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

9 Days for Life
(Suggested Weekends: Two Weekends Before the Start of 9 Days for Life)

- ***Option 1***

Join thousands of Catholics nationwide in the annual Respect Life novena, *9 Days for Life*, [insert dates]. Get daily intentions, brief reflections, and more. Sign up at **www.9daysforlife.com**!

- ***Option 2***

Join thousands of Catholics nationwide praying the annual *9 Days for Life* novena, [insert dates]. Sign up today at **www.9daysforlife.com**!

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
(Suggested Weekend: Weekend Before the Day of Prayer)

- ***Option 1***

This [insert day of week, month, date], the Church in the United States observes the annual "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." This day is set aside to pray for the legal protection of human life and to do penance for the violations to human dignity through abortion. We are called to observe this day through prayer and penance. More information: **respectlife.org/january-22**.

- ***Option 2***

Did You Know? This [insert day of week], January 22, the Church in the United States observes the annual "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." We are called to observe this day through prayer and penance. **respectlife.org/january-22**

Healing after Abortion
(Suggested Weekend: Weekend Before the Day of Prayer)

If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential, compassionate help is available. Visit **HopeAfterAbortion.org**.

PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

9 Days for Life
(Suggested Weekends: Two Weekends Before the Start of 9 Days for Life)

- ***Option 1***

You're invited to join thousands of Catholics nationwide in prayer for the respect of human life during a special novena called *9 Days for Life*. Visit **9daysforlife.com** to sign up to receive daily intentions from January [insert start date] through the [insert end date].

- ***Option 2***

You're invited to join Catholics nationwide in praying for the respect of human life. The annual *9 Days for Life* novena will take place from January [insert start date] through the [insert end date]. See the bulletin for more information.

- ***Option 3***

Join Catholics nationwide in a special Respect Life novena called *9 Days for Life* from January [insert start date] through the [insert end date]. Please see the bulletin for more information.

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
(Suggested Weekend: Weekend Before the Day of Prayer)

- ***Option 1***

[Insert day of the week] is the annual "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children," which Catholics are called to observe through prayer and penance. Please see the bulletin for more information.

- ***Option 2***

[Insert day of the week] is the annual "Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." Catholics are called to observe this day through prayer and penance.

INTERCESSIONS

These sample intercessions were written for use during the month of January to help observe the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (January 22); however, many can be used throughout the year. These intentions are appropriate for inclusion in the Prayer of the Faithful at Sunday Mass.

They can also be printed in the weekly bulletin, included at a local Respect Life march or rally, featured in email newsletters, shared on social media platforms, or prayed during personal or family prayer times.

For the legal protection of unborn children and for loving support for their mothers before and after their births;
We pray to the Lord:

May all who suffer from participating in abortion turn to God's loving forgiveness;
We pray to the Lord:

For public servants:
May God grant them the humility, wisdom, and courage to defend all human life;
We pray to the Lord:

For our nation:
May God unite us in peace and respect for each other and reverence for all human life;
We pray to the Lord:

May friends and families of women with difficult pregnancies provide loving, life-affirming support for both mother and child;
We pray to the Lord:

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HOMILY HELPS

These homily notes are provided to help priests and deacons preach on the Gospel of Life on the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (January 22) and the weekend prior. While the Day of Prayer is observed on January 22 (or January 23, when January 22 falls on a Sunday), not all parishioners will be able to attend this midweek Mass. Incorporating Respect Life themes in the preceding Sunday Mass homily will allow a greater number in the parish community to be made aware of and participate in this day of prayer and penance called for by the Church.

Other ministry leaders can also use these reflections to highlight Respect Life connections elsewhere, such as in a Bible study on the weekly Sunday readings, in a small group or a faith formation setting, or as part of other ministry gatherings.

Sunday Before the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

Each year on January 22, all dioceses in the United States are called to observe a *Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children.* January 22 is the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion throughout our nation. Since then, over 60 million lives have been lost. That's more than the size of Italy's population. On June 24, 2022, the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*. While God, in His mercy, ended the nearly fifty-year nationwide regime of abortion on demand, right now state and federal laws, in many instances, are still hostile to preborn children. So, great prayer and advocacy is very needed.

This coming [insert day of the week], we set aside a day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. It is also a day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion. We are each called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting and/or giving alms.

The act of abortion rejects God's gift of life. Abortion destroys the life of a child, lovingly knit together in his or her mother's womb, and for someone who has participated in abortion, the loss of a child can form a hole in their heart so deep that sometimes it seems nothing can fill the emptiness. As a human and Christian family, we grieve the loss of so many lives. And yet, even in our grief, we know there is hope.

Christ came for the very purpose of redeeming our sins, offering us His forgiveness, and giving us His peace. Jesus comes to free us from the bonds of sin. And there is no sin that is beyond God's mercy. It is never too late to seek the Lord's mercy and healing through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. His greatest desire is to forgive us, pouring out His infinite mercy upon us so that we may be healed. If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential, compassionate help is available. You can find out more information about the Church's ministry for healing after abortion by visiting **hopeafterabortion.com**. (That website is listed in this week's bulletin.)

We are all sinners. But with the grace of God, we can become saints. We can be lights to the nations, sharing the truth about the irrevocable dignity of the human person. Where sin abounds, God's grace abounds all the more. Therefore, let us take courage and offer prayer and penance, that all human life would be welcomed in love and protected in law.

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Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children | January 22

(Other options for readings are listed here.)

First Reading: Genesis 1:1 – 2:2

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 139:1b-3, 13-14ab, 14c-15

Second Reading: 1 John 3:11-21

Gospel Acclamation: Psalm 119:88

Gospel: Luke 1:39-56

Today, all dioceses in the United States are called to observe a Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. January 22 is the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion throughout our nation. And while, on June 24, 2022, the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade*, right now state and federal laws, in many instances, are still hostile to preborn children. So, great prayer and advocacy is very needed.

The Church sets today aside as day of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. It is also a day of penance for all violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion. To help us in this observance, today we celebrate the *Mass for Giving Thanks to God for the Gift of Human Life.* As individuals, we are each called to observe this day through the penitential practices of prayer, fasting and/or almsgiving.

In the First Reading, we hear the beautiful story of creation. We hear how God created the night and the day, the earth and the sky, the land and the waters, and all the creatures of the earth. And God saw that it was *good.*

But creation was not yet complete. Genesis tells us:

> *God created man in his image;*
> *in the image of God he created him;*
> *male and female he created them.*
>
> *God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."*

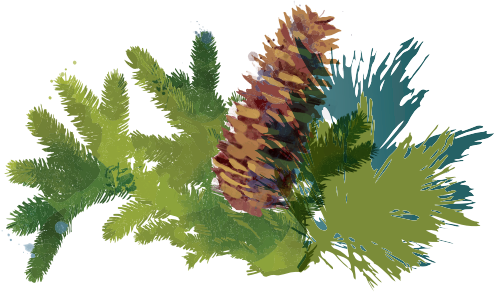
By creating man and woman in His own image, God endowed the human race with a dignity that no other creature can claim and that can never be taken away. Therefore, human life must be cherished, valued, and protected above all else.

Today's Psalm expounds on that creation story as we are told how God lovingly knits each of us together in our mother's womb. It is ultimately God who forms our fingers and our toes, our hearts and souls. He therefore knows our inmost being and the depths of our hearts. We are *fearfully* and *wonderfully* made by God as the crown of creation. And for this we offer God our praise.

By virtue of this dignity with which we have been endowed by God, we are called to love one another as brothers and sisters. In the Second Reading, St. John recalls the story of Cain and Abel, which comes shortly after the story of creation. This is the first occasion in Scripture in which we see a person take the life of another human being. We are told that Cain allowed his heart to be hardened by anger and jealousy. Sin crept into his soul, preventing Cain from recognizing the dignity of his brother. The story of Cain demonstrates how those who allow sin to find a place in their hearts are blinded to the truth.

Abortion is an example of how we, as individuals and as a society, fail to recognize the dignity of each child, knit within the womb of his or her mother. We allow our hearts to be hardened to the truth. Our culture either fails to recognize the undeniable humanity of unborn children, who deserve our love and protection, or disregards it.

But the Gospel reveals how we *should* respond to the gift of new life. In the story of the Visitation, we see Mary, an unmarried woman who is newly pregnant with the Infant Jesus, going in haste to the aid of her cousin Elizabeth, who is herself six months pregnant. Luke tells us that at the very moment that Elizabeth heard the sound of Mary's voice, the infant in Elizabeth's womb *leaped for joy*. From the womb of his own mother, John the Baptist recognizes the presence of Jesus, hidden within the womb of Mary. And Elizabeth



responds with those familiar and beautiful words: *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"* Both John and Elizabeth recognize the life hidden within Mary's womb, the one who is their Savior.

This Gospel passage so tenderly illustrates the humanity of all unborn children, created in God's own image and likeness. Every new life should be greeted with the same joyful enthusiasm that led John the Baptist to literally leap in the womb of Elizabeth.

While God's gift of new life is always something to be celebrated, we must also recognize that a pregnancy, especially when unexpected, can bring with it many challenges. Mothers too often find themselves afraid, vulnerable, abandoned, and in need. And God calls us to respond in love. We are called to go in haste, as the Blessed Mother did, to offer expectant mothers the support, encouragement, and love that they deserve. Mary's example should inspire us to serve mothers and families, even amidst our own needs.

On this day, may we join the Church in continued prayer for the legal protection of all unborn children. May we offer penance for all violations against the dignity of human life. In a special way, may we also pray for all women and men who suffer from participation in abortion, that they may find healing, peace, and reconciliation with God.

And may we recommit ourselves to supporting all expectant mothers. May we never fail to *set out … in haste.* As the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy, so may our hearts leap with joy at the wonders of new life in every expectant mother.

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SAMPLE ACTIVITY

Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims

In January, many pro-life pilgrims travel to Washington, D.C. for the annual March for Life. You may have a group of pilgrims from your parish or school traveling to this national event. While not everyone is able to travel to the nation's capital, countless local marches and rallies are hosted in cities and dioceses around the country.

Even if your parish does have a group of pilgrims going to the March for Life, you can also research local events so other members of your community can participate in your local area. You may want to consider helping to organize a group to go together. This activity utilizes the *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims* to send off those in your parish, school, or faith community. Another order for blessing is also available to offer upon their return. A priest or deacon will need to offer the blessing. If the celebration of Mass is preferred as the beginning or end of a pilgrimage, it may be concluded with a blessing of the pilgrims taken from the order of blessings mentioned above.

The *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims* can be found at **respectlife.org/action-guides**.

Materials

- Copies of the *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims Before Their Journey*
- (Optional) Copies of the *Order of Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims as They Return from Their Journey*

Directions

1. Find out whether there is a group of pilgrims from your parish, school, or diocese traveling either to the March for Life in D.C. or to another rally or march. If not, check with your diocese to see if any local marches or rallies are being offered.
2. Based on what you discover, decide whether you would like to organize a group from your parish or school to participate in a local event. If so, you can plan to meet at the parish or school before your departure and perhaps coordinate a carpool.
3. Whether you have a group of pilgrims traveling to Washington, D.C., or to a local march or rally, you can choose to offer the *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims* as part of an already scheduled event, or you can offer it at a separate time, prior to their departure.

If the departure happens to occur near a regularly scheduled Mass, Holy Hour, or parish event, look into the possibility of connecting the two events to have greater community participation. You may want to include the blessing within the Sunday Mass the prior weekend. Following the Prayer after Communion, the presider invites all the pilgrims to stand, says the prayer of blessing, and then concludes the Mass with the final blessing for the entire assembly. In a school setting, perhaps the entire school can gather at the end of a school day to pray for the pilgrims together. It can be very powerful to include the larger community in this prayerful sendoff.

You might also consider inviting parishioners or fellow students to write down words of prayerful support or prayer intentions for the pilgrims to take with them on their journey. You could set up a table with slips of paper and writing utensils, along with a basket where they could be collected.

Depending on your unique situation, it may be more convenient to celebrate the order for blessing immediately prior to the pilgrims' departure as its own separate event. In this case, make an effort to invite families, friends, and the parish or school community to participate so the pilgrims can still have the prayerful support of their community. Ask a priest or deacon to celebrate the order for blessing before pilgrims board their buses or break up into carpools.

Your parish, school, or community may have multiple pilgrimage groups participating in different ways. Perhaps a group of students is traveling to Washington, D.C., and another group is participating in a local event. You can celebrate the order for blessing separately for these groups, or find a time to bring them all together for the celebration.

The schedule of your priest or deacon may determine how and when the order for blessing is celebrated. When asking for his participation, try to offer multiple options, and be as flexible as possible.

4. Once the time and place for the order for blessing has been determined, choose someone to serve as a lector during the celebration. Perhaps you would like to serve in this capacity. Once the lector has been determined, inform the priest or deacon who has been appointed. He may want to offer him or her further instructions or preparations.

5. An order for blessing is also available to celebrate the return of pro-life pilgrims. If possible, ask your priest or deacon to celebrate this additional order for blessing when your pilgrimage group(s) return(s) home. This is a beautiful way to welcome them home after a powerful experience.

One Step Further

To take this activity one step further, consider hosting a simple sharing session in which pilgrims can share and reflect on their experiences with the community. You may want to host this immediately upon returning from the pilgrimage, following the *Order for the Blessing of Pro-Life Pilgrims as They Return from Their Journey.*

For example, you might want to offer light refreshments and a quick sharing session with those who attended a local rally or march. If the pilgrimage group is coming back from Washington, D.C., and has had a long or even overnight bus ride, plan the sharing session a day or two later, so pilgrims have time to recover and catch up on sleep.

Depending on the time of day, consider offering light refreshments such as coffee and donuts, sodas and snacks, simple sandwiches, or cheese and crackers. If you would like to share a more substantial meal, consider making it potluck. Invite the pilgrims, their families, and the larger community. Open the gathering with a simple prayer, and then allow for "open-mic" time for those who participated to share their experiences and how they were impacted. W*hat struck them the most? What kind of lasting impression has the pilgrimage left on them? How has it made them think about the gift of life and various attacks on it?*

Once everyone has had their turn, close the gathering with another brief prayer.

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